

240.30

Nutrition Education

Overview

**Definition:
Nutrition
Education**

Nutrition education is the process of gaining the understanding and skills necessary to promote and protect nutritional wellbeing through food choices, physical activity, and other health behaviors.

Note: Adapted from the USDA definition written by Eileen Kennedy.

**WIC nutrition
education
contacts**

Nutrition education contacts provide opportunities to engage participants in the process of nutrition education. These contacts must involve participants in more than information sharing in order to affect or influence food choices and health behaviors. Examples of strategies that promote participant-centered nutrition education during contacts follow:

- Dialogue and interactive discussion using open-ended questions
 - Topics focused on issues relevant to the participant
 - Problem-solving
 - Skill-building and other application activities, and
 - Goal-setting.
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**Activities that
do not count**

The following activities cannot be counted contacts because there is not opportunity for interaction:

- Receiving print or other take home materials
 - Watching an audiovisual program
 - Looking at a display
 - Tasting recipes or foods
 - Listening to a lecture
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**Use materials
to reinforce
messages**

WIC agencies are strongly encouraged to use appropriate print, audiovisual, and other materials (posters, bulletin boards, displays, health fairs, public service announcements, etc.) to reinforce the nutrition and health messages provided in nutrition education contacts.

References

- MPSF: WC-06-17-P: WIC Nutrition Education Guidance
 - Nondiscretionary WIC Certification & General Administrative Procedures 5/08
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Developing Nutrition Education Plans

Introduction WIC participants must be offered at least two opportunities for nutrition education contacts during each six-month certification period. Nutrition education contacts shall be made available at a quarterly rate to participants or parents/caretakers of infant and child participants certified for a period in excess of six months. A nutrition education plan identifying the topic and setting for these contacts should be developed at the time of certification.

Responsible personnel Competent professional authorities (CPAs) develop the nutrition education plans for each participant.

Goals for nutrition education Nutrition education should be designed to address the following broad goals:

- Stress the relationship between proper nutrition, physical activity and good health with special emphasis on the participant's life cycle nutritional needs.
- Raise the awareness about the dangers of using drugs and other harmful substances during pregnancy and lactation.
- Assist the participant in achieving a positive change in food and physical activity patterns resulting in improved nutritional status and the prevention of nutrition-related problems.

Content and setting for contacts The content of nutrition education contacts and the setting (face-to-face with individuals or groups, telephone, or electronic mediums) must address individual needs such as:

- Nutritional needs and interests,
- Nutritional risk,
- Health history,
- Household situation,
- Anticipatory guidance for nutrition and physical activity through the lifecycle,
- Cultural preferences,
- Language spoken and literacy level, and
- The CPA's evaluation of appropriate teaching strategy and setting.

Note: The Iowa WIC program only approves www.wichealth.org for participant electronic internet based nutrition education contacts.

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Developing Nutrition Education Plans, Continued

**Elements of
effective
contacts**

The most effective WIC nutrition education contacts incorporate these elements:

- Review nutrition assessment to determine nutrition education needs;
 - Select and tailor messages that engage participants in setting goals;
 - Use interactive counseling methods and teaching strategies;
 - Select appropriate setting;
 - Provide informational or environmental reinforcements; and
 - Follow-up at the next contact to evaluate progress, provide support, identify barriers and reassess/redefine nutrition education plan.
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Nutrition Education Contacts

First contact Provide the first nutrition education contact at the time of certification. See Policy 240.50 for more information on initial (or first) contacts.

Second contact Schedule at least one second nutrition education contact for every participant during each six month certification period and on a quarterly rate for participants certified for a period in excess of six months. Make the appointment for the second nutrition education contact with the participant at the time of certification.

If a participant is unable to attend their scheduled nutrition education, explain the option of wichealth.org or reschedule them for another nutrition appointment within the same month if possible. If neither of the above options are possible, allow the participant to receive one month's issuance of benefits and reschedule the participant for the nutrition contact the following month.

See Policy 240.55 for more information on second contacts.

Contacts for infants Nutrition education contacts are part of the Health Update appointments scheduled for infants certified to their first birthday. These contacts must be offered at approximately quarterly intervals. Follow these guidelines:

- If the infant is less than three months old, schedule three Health Update appointments.
- If the infant is three months or older, schedule two Health Update appointments.

Note: See Policy 215.75 for more information.

Contacts for breastfeeding mothers Nutrition education is also part of the Health Update appointment for breastfeeding mothers. This appointment should coincide with the infant's mid-year Health Update appointment.

Note: See Policy 215.75 for more information.

**Documenting
nutrition
education
contacts**

The same nutrition education topic codes are used by all local WIC agencies. The appropriate codes must be documented in the participant record on the nutrition education panel.

Participants who refuse any second nutrition education offered during the initial or subsequent certifications may not be denied food benefits. The local agency shall document "NE Refusal" in the participant's electronic record.